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The Transfer of ‘International Best Practice’ in a Brazilian MNC: A Consideration of the Convergence and Contingency Perspectives

John Geary (corresponding author)

College of Business
University College Dublin
Blackrock
Dublin, Ireland
john.geary@ucd.ie

Roberta Aguzzoli

Durham Business School
Mill Hill Lane
DH1 3LB
Durham, England
Roberta.aguzzoli@durham.ac.uk

Jorge Lengler

Durham Business School
Mill Hill Lane
DH1 3LB
Durham, England
jorge.lengler@durham.ac.uk

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Abstract

This study examines the transfer of a Brazilian MNC's HR model to its subsidiaries in the UK, Canada, Switzerland and Norway. It explores where the model was sourced from, to what extent it bore a distinct Brazilian complexion, and whether it was adapted to meet the strictures of host institutional constraints and traditions. The paper uses these questions to address an important theoretical debate in the international business literature; that is, whether the pattern of diffusion of management practices within MNCs will lead to a convergence of practices across companies and countries à la the convergence perspective, or whether this is unlikely given the variety of social and political constraints limiting such a process as suggested by the contingency perspective. We find that the MNC imposed a unitary (US-sourced) model of HR 'best practice' on all of its subsidiaries. Thus our empirical findings support the convergence thesis. However, we argue that these outcomes are largely explained by relations of power and economic dependence; specifically the co-existence of dominant-country (US) practices and a dominant sectoral firm operating in economically dependent regions. Where similar circumstances are replicated one might foresee convergence within sectors across countries, but otherwise pluralism and eclecticism between sectors and across countries might be the predominant pattern along the lines envisaged in the conceptualization of "converging divergences".

Key Words: international human resource management; best practice; emerging economies; Brazil; convergence perspective; contingency perspective

1. Introduction

In this paper we address the question of how does a MNC from an emerging economy, Brazil, identify and transfer its HRM practices to its subsidiaries. We address this important question by examining the case of a very significant Brazilian MNC with operations in four mature western economies (Switzerland, Norway, UK and Canada) whose labor and employment systems vary greatly. We draw on two theoretical frameworks – the convergence and contingency perspectives – to account for whether and by what means and with effects the case MNC sought to diffuse its global HR model.

We use the case of a MNC from Brazil to address a series of specific questions. These are: to what extent did the case MNC from an emerging country draw on its parent-country's national business system to develop its preferred HR practices? We were particularly curious to know whether, in the absence of a rich repository of indigenous managerial expertise, management was compelled to look beyond its national boundaries for know-how and guidance. If this was the case, how and where did the MNC source such expertise? Did it, for example, rely on international consultants? Assuming they did, to what extent did the 'best practices' proffered displace home-country influences such that there remained little by way of its HR practices retaining a 'national pedigree'? If this was the case, might we then suggest that MNCs from emerging countries have the potential to become a conduit for the diffusion of 'international best practices' and therewith the convergence of managerial practices across nation states? These are important questions, but remain to date relatively under-explored in the international literature. There is, we concede some research on these issues, but much of it is derived from survey research (Harzing and Sorge, 2003), which, while useful in mapping the extent and nature of diffusion of management practices, tells us little about the processes and dynamics of the sharing and transfer of 'best practice'.

In our study we learn that the MNC did indeed source its HR practices from outside Brazil, relying primarily on American consultancy firms. Yet we also find that the institutional context from which the MNC emerged had a clear and discernible effect on its management style and, in turn, on the manner in which its HR ‘best practices’ were diffused and implemented in its foreign subsidiaries. This raises a rather obvious distinction, then, between ‘management style’ and ‘best practice’. We use the latter term to refer to the particular HR policies introduced by corporate management, and it is distinguished here from the manner of their introduction (management style). Thus we make no claim that the introduction of ‘best practice’ is or ought to be accompanied by information-sharing, consultation and negotiation as might be prescribed by ‘good management’. We deliberately eschew any such judgment. Indeed we find that the MNC’s US-sourced HR policies were transferred by means of a distinct Brazilian style of management that was assertive and, for the main part, unyielding. We thus identify a unique amalgam of practices and style of management which bore a similar hue in each of the four case countries and which critically came to override host country institutional impediments and constraints. Therefore, there was a considerable convergence of practice across the four case subsidiaries.

We explain this convergence of practices by a variety of factors, including corporate management motivation to adopt ‘international best practice’, the MNC’s ethnocentrism that permitted very limited autonomy to local subsidiary management, and the porosity of the host institutional regimes in a context of economic dependence and immense corporate power. We give particular emphasis to the latter factor and argue that outcomes were ultimately contingent on the institutional and socio-political context of the MNC and its subsidiaries. In interpreting the wider significance of our findings, we remain critical of reductionist claims in the literature which point either towards increasing convergence of management practices within MNCs and across sectors à la the convergence thesis or the resilience of diversity as

found in the contingency perspective. We argue the reality is more complex; there is evidence of both. Still, lines of differentiation can be identified. We suggest that the likely future pattern is one of discernible patterns of convergence both within MNCs and within sectors across countries, together with the likelihood of divergence across MNCs and sectors within countries.

2. Literature Review

The convergence thesis is built upon a number of suppositions. First, there is the assumption that there is an identifiable set of practices which are considered optimal or the ‘best’ at any given time (Kostova and Roth, 2002). ‘Best practice’ is deemed to be ‘best’ by its association with leading firms from hegemonic or dominant national business systems, such as US-based MNCs (Smith and Meiksins, 1995; Kipping and Wright, 2012). The transmission or emulation of ‘best practice’ is particularly likely to occur in MNCs which originate in ‘lesser’ or subordinate national business systems where specialized managerial competencies are lacking (Elger and Smith, 2006; Kuruvilla et al., 2003; Pudelko and Harzing, 2007). Such replication is derived, too, from the leading position of American business schools and consultancy firms and their respective roles in the training of managers and in the dissemination of management expertise (Kipping and Wright, 2012). The process of diffusion is also helped by the sheer number of American MNCs with subsidiaries in other countries (Pudelko and Harzing, 2008). Emulation is thus seen to arise as a consequence of both mimetic and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Closely associated with the notion of ‘best practice’ and the convergence thesis is the concept of dominance effects. Such effects have been found to be particularly evident at a sectoral level. Here the practices of a ‘leading’ or ‘strong’ MNC are identified as exercising a pattern-making role within a given sector. For example, Royle (2004; 2006) found evidence of such dominance and convergence within the fast food-service sector in Italy, Germany and

Spain. As McDonalds came to undermine significant elements of its host countries' industrial relations systems by imposing its 'one best way', in turn its alien practices were soon mimicked by indigenously-owned fast food retailers. By such means, McDonalds was identified as a vector not only for the emasculation of countries' industrial relations systems, but also for the cross-national convergence of employment practices within its sector. In such circumstances, 'best practice' assumes a particular sectoral configuration such that we come to witness a convergence of practices around a shared sense of what is 'best' within sectors, but otherwise a divergence of practices may prevail across sectors; a process, to borrow the term of Katz and Darbshire (2000), of one entailing "converging divergences".

The advantage for management of using such 'best practices' is that not only are they deemed to be 'the best' in the sense they are acclaimed to work, but they also reduce organizational complexity (Christmann, 2004), time and effort in experimenting with a variety of practices (Edwards and Ferner, 2002), help in the establishment of a common corporate culture, as well as serving as an aid with the global integration of business operations and the delivery or provision of standardized products and services across different countries (Edwards et al., 2007; Ferner et al., 2005). In essence, they enhance managerial control, and the logic of best practice is used to enjoin subsidiaries' workforces to accept the logic of their implementation (Pudelko and Harzing, 2007).

As MNCs from emerging markets internationalize into developed economies one might expect them to engage in what Edwards (1998) has termed 'reverse diffusion'. In this situation, headquarters management identify 'best practice' in their subsidiaries and transfer it back to be adopted within their home country firms and then transferred onward ('forward diffusion') again to their other foreign facilities. Such a view links with the 'resource-based' view of the firm wherein MNCs are seen to extract international competitive advantage from sourcing distinctive resources from across their subsidiaries (Taylor et al., 1996). The origin

of 'best practice' may then be multiple and variable and may stem from any number of distinctive characteristics of host business systems. However, the resulting convergence on a particular amalgam of 'best practices' is shaped by management's rational choices that are in turn shaped by the economic context of the firm (Oliver, 1991). There is certainly evidence that such an activity is a strategic priority among emerging countries' MNCs (Zhang and Edwards, 2007).

The assumption that MNCs will want to standardize their HR practices across their subsidiaries and this would lead to convergence in HR practices internationally has been subject to much criticism (Gerhart, 2005). An alternative perspective, which we label the contingency perspective, gives emphasis to a variety of factors which might constrain such a process. Among the most significant is the influence of local institutional constraints and the extent to which they are marshalled by local actors in limiting the preferences of MNCs' management. Outcomes are thus seen to be uncertain, and contingent on the nature and shape of power relations within the MNC (Ferner et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 1996). With this perspective HR practices are seen to be deeply wedded to particular institutional structures, legacies and cultural preferences, and are difficult to alter, at least in the short term (Farndale and Paauwe, 2007; Pudelko and Harzing, 2007). Thus where practices are 'localized'; that is, adapted to suit the local context and to marry with local traditions and norms, emphasis is given to the possibility of divergence in practices across the units of a MNC (Björkman and Budhwar, 2007; Chung et al., 2014).

The tension between host and home country institutional influences is widely recognized in the international literature to be most acutely felt by those MNCs whose home country practices diverge significantly from practice and traditions of the host economy (Edwards and Kuruvilla, 2005; Tempel et al., 2006). Kostova refers to this as 'institutional distance' (Kostova, 1999; Kostova and Roth, 2002). Such potential for conflict may require a

MNC's headquarters to consider giving local management discretion as to how to best configure the host country's subsidiaries' practices (Edwards and Kuruvilla, 2005; Ferner et al., 2001). Where this occurs, the quest for external legitimacy (or local responsiveness) in the host country is often said to triumph over management's quest for internal consistency (or global integration) within the MNC (Xu and Shenkar, 2002). The greater the institutional "distance" between the host country and the MNC's home country the less likely, it is argued, that common 'best practice' will be diffused successfully (Colakoglu and Caligiuri, 2008; Harzing and Sorge, 2003; Taylor et al., 1996). One study, for example, of four industries in India and two in Malaysia found that local actors such as government, unions, and management were able to erect obstacles to the diffusion of 'best practice' of MNCs from dominant economies. Accordingly, the authors argued that 'best practices' are not equivalent to universalistic MNC practices (Kuruvilla et al., 2003: 191). It might thus be anticipated that an emerging country's MNC's ability to transfer common HR practices will vary depending on the institutional profile of the host countries in which it operates and in turn on their institutional distance from the MNC's parent country.

Other constraints also matter, including particularly, the resources available to headquarters management to identify and implement its policies and practices (Taylor et al., 1996); the perceived necessity or desire to diffuse standardized practices, which is likely to vary depending on the level of corporate or production integration (Edwards and Rees, 2006); a subsidiary's dependence on its headquarters (Farndale et al., 2010) and vice versa; the subsidiary's strategic role and influence within the MNC (Bouquet and Birkinshaw, 2008) together with the subsidiaries' management knowledge of local markets, local institutional constraints, and the size and performance of the subsidiary (Ferner et al., 2011; Schuler and Rogovsky, 1998).

Fundamentally, then, while the contingency perspective recognizes that the headquarters possesses vast resources and the authority to render legitimate its preferred policies, the transfer process is uncertain and contingent; that is, it is not solely determined by the rational prescriptions of corporate management, but is rather shaped by “the interplay of interests and the possession and deployment of power resources by a variety of actors” (Ferner and Tempel, 2006: 31).

3. The Brazilian institutional context

While it has become common practice to classify national business systems as being either liberal or co-ordinated on the basis of the co-ordinating capacity or restraining influence of their business and labour market institutions (Hall and Soskice 2001), any such easy classification has limited resonance for an emerging economy such as Brazil. We rely instead on Schneider’s (2009) analysis of the distinctive institutional foundations of business systems in Latin America which he identifies as constituting hierarchical market economies (HMEs) and into which Brazil fits well. HMEs are characterised by the dominance of diversified business groups; the significant presence of MNCs, especially of US origin; a dearth of investment in education, training and skill development; weak (workplace) trade unions and large informal labor markets. Overlapping each of these elements is the pervasive presence of hierarchical relations where employers determine – often unilaterally – patterns of work organisation and the nature and extent of job training; further, grievance and employee voice mechanisms are weak or absent. The presence of highly centralized and hierarchical styles of management is seen to be rooted in two influences: first, in a long tradition of state intervention in labor markets that had the effect of dissuading employers from conducting bilateral negotiations with unions and instead inclined them to pursue their interests directly with the state; and second in the predominance of a small number of large companies – many in family ownership and mainly MNCs – that dominate their given sectors. In the specific

instance of Brazil, the State has played a key role in sponsoring the development of industrial companies in key economic sectors, including natural resources (Diniz, 1997; Leal et al., 2002).

Brazilian scholars trace the origins of Brazil's authoritarian style of management to the country's historical legacy of slavery, colonialism, the early formation of an elite class, the persistence of a highly class structured society, and the rise of "bureaucratic authoritarianism" during periods of military rule (Carvalho Neto, 2003; Ribeiro, 1995). This style of management relies on informal institutions and personal relationships (Ribeiro, 1995) rather than on formal institutions as observed in mature economies (Hall and Soskice, 2001). However, it would be unnecessarily crude to portray Brazilian employers as being 'cultural dopes'. Local scholars now acknowledge that traditional styles of management have been tempered in recent years, especially in large well-resourced Brazilian companies which possess the means to import 'best practice' – mainly from the United States – either by recruiting from leading business schools or by availing of the expertise of US-based management consultancy firms (Chu and Wood, 2008; Fleury and Fleury, 2006; Tanure et al., 2010).

The management of headquarters-subsidary relations within Brazilian MNCs is characterized in the literature as being highly integrated with subsidiaries possessing limited local autonomy and particularly in respect of human resources management policy (Muritiba et al., 2012). The transfer of personnel from head office to subsidiaries, particularly during the early stages of MNCs' expansion, is a common practice. While Brazilian MNCs rate human resources management as an important competence in pursuing international expansion (Fleury & Fleury, 2006), few have been identified as dedicating sufficient resources to developing a global human resources management competency (Muritiba et al., 2012), or in

providing sufficient training for expatriate management to cope with, or to be sensitive to, the requirements of cross-cultural management (Tanure et al., 2009).

4. The host countries' institutional contexts

In order to understand how the institutional environments of mature market economies might constrain or resource MNCs in the transfer of their HR policies, we distinguish between varieties of labor market regimes (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Switzerland and Norway were chosen as examples of 'co-ordinated market economies', and Canada and the United Kingdom as 'liberal market economies'. Switzerland is a 'soft' or 'liberal' variant of a co-ordinated market economy (Börsch, 2008). Trade unions are relatively weak and the state's regulatory capacity is more limited than that of other European countries arising from the country's canton structure. Labor law is restrained in its reach and most aspects of employment regulation are governed by collective agreements. Norway's institutional environment is highly coordinated and regulated. Its trade unions are strong and there is considerable government intervention in the field of employment relations (Dølvik and Stokke, 1998; Dølvik, 2007). Further, the Labor Party's traditional hegemony has played a key role in shaping power relations between employers and unions and has encouraged co-operation between them (Dølvik and Stokke, 1998). The labor market is characterized by strict employment protection, and it is politically difficult for the government to unilaterally institute structural reforms in the labor market (Neal, 2007), allowing trade unions to exert some considerable influence on the management of companies (Gooderham et al., 1999).

In Canada labor markets are relatively deregulated. Relations between employers and unions have traditionally been portrayed as being adversarial or arm's-length with unions earnestly defending their right to bargain for their members' terms and conditions of employment with employers striving to protect their right to manage and implement organizational changes as they might deem appropriate (Godard, 2009). Although union

density has held up relatively well in recent years (30%), it has declined more noticeably in some sectors, including mining (22%) (Galarneau and Sohn, 2013). The United Kingdom is characterized as a liberal state with deregulated labor and capital markets with low levels of state intervention and business co-ordination (Howell, 2007). Both the United Kingdom and Canada are also regarded in the literature as being particularly open to the importation of novel human resources management practices, which is attributed to their long history of hosting MNCs, particularly from the United States (see Ferner et al., 2013).

5. The case company and its subsidiaries

The case company, here called BrazilCo, is a very large and significant Brazilian MNC. It has more than 140,000 workers at home and overseas and is extremely profitable. In 2009 its market value was US\$150 billion; its net income was around US\$30 billion from 2010 to 2013. It had sales of around US\$90 billion in this period. With operations in almost 40 countries, it is possible for the company to source production from other facilities. BrazilCo was state-owned until 1997. Since then it grew significantly through foreign acquisitions. Its headquarters remain in Brazil as are over 60 per cent of its assets and 80 per cent of its workforce. Its board of directors is composed mainly of Brazilian nationals. It is a dominant player in a number of sector segments in which it operates.

BrazilCo's Canadian and UK operations were acquired in 2006 through the acquisition of a Canadian-owned mining and refining MNC, which we label CanadaCo. It had over 5,000 workers employed in four mining and refining plants and in one regional office. While Canada accounted for 47 per cent of CanadaCo's revenues pre-acquisition, post-acquisition it represented a mere 4 per cent of BrazilCo's revenues. Union density at BrazilCo's Canadian operations was 70 per cent and union representatives exercised considerable influence over management decision-making in respect of work organization, reward systems and pay levels.

The BrazilCo's British refinery employed 260 workers, and while over half of its workers were union members, the union exercised little, if any, influence over management.

BrazilCo entered Norway through acquiring a former state-owned facility that had been closed for a number of years. The Norwegian refinery, which was located in the north of the country, employed 78 workers, most of whom were re-recruited from the staff of the former company. Union density was very high (90 per cent). It was of modest strategic significance to BrazilCo since it accounted for a mere 1 per cent of the MNC's overall revenues. The Swiss subsidiary was established in 2006 as a regional office hub. It was responsible for tax, risk assessment, marketing and sales, budgeting and production, as well as the implementation of policies and practices emanating from the Brazilian headquarters in the company's European and Middle Eastern operations. It employed 89 workers, only 15 of whom were Swiss. There was no trade union or works council present in the facility.

Three of the four countries' subsidiaries were located in peripheral areas. The local communities were very reliant on the company's investment and employment. This dependence was greater in Canada. In two localities, BrazilCo employed almost 65 per cent of the local workforce. Local unemployment was also high. In Canada it varied between 7 and 11 per cent, and in the UK and Norway it was 8 and 7 per cent respectively. Unemployment levels were, by comparison, considerably lower in Switzerland.

6. Research Methodology

The data were derived from in-depth semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1). Preliminary interviews were conducted in July 2009 with two HR global managers in the company's corporate headquarters in Brazil. Between July 2009 and February 2011 a further 49 interviews were undertaken, mainly among senior management. Of these, 16 were conducted in Brazil, 8 in Switzerland, 12 in Canada, 8 in Norway, and 7 in the UK. These were supplemented by e-mail communications, usually to seek clarification on matters raised

during the interviews. After conducting a preliminary analysis of the data, additional telephone interviews were conducted with two corporate human resource managers in Brazil in January 2013. These interviews were conducted for a number of purposes: to ‘road-test’ our first conclusions, to fill gaps in the data collection, and to derive an update on developments in the transfer of practices to the four subsidiaries. Excluding these latter interviews and four other interviews (one each in Switzerland, Canada, UK, and Brazil) all were tape-recorded, giving a total of over thirty-six hours recording. All were transcribed by one of the authors. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese with Brazilian staff and in English with non-Brazilian interviewees. In the case of the Swiss and Canadian subsidiaries, expatriate managers were also interviewed. In Brazil, the former corporate HR Director was interviewed in an effort to confirm the testimonies given by current executives. Trade union and staff representatives were interviewed in Brazil (CUT, Força Sindical, and UGT), Norway (LO), Canada (USW), and the UK (Unite) in order to understand the role and influence these actors might have played in shaping local HR practices.

Every reasonable effort was made to conduct the interviews until data saturation was reached (Guest et al., 2006), and verification was sought through secondary sources of data. A diverse range of documentary sources was used, including various books on BrazilCo’s history, annual reports (from 1942 to 2011), internal communications, a documentary, as well as articles in *Veja* and *Folha de São Paulo* from 1968 to 2012. The latter are Brazil’s leading and most respected magazine and newspaper titles. In Switzerland, we reviewed articles in various press media (*Le Temps* and *Tribune de Genève*) from 1998 to 2012 that referred to our case company. In Norway we reviewed LO, NHO and government documentation. In Canada we examined articles from the *Toronto Star* and *The Sudbury Star* from 1985 to 2011, and in the UK various collective agreements and articles from the *Western Mail* and *South Wales Evening Post* from 1980 to 2011.

The data obtained from the interviews and the aforementioned secondary data sources were transposed into a computer file to enable a deductive content analysis. The data analysis was conducted in two steps. First the material was reviewed in their original languages: Portuguese and English. It was feared that translating the interviews and secondary data into only one of those languages – at least at an early point in the research – could lead to misunderstandings (Xian, 2008). No computer-aided software was used. Instead, a qualitative form of content analysis was conducted (Krippendorff, 2004), in which the sentence was the basic unit of analysis related by key words grouped as categories to produce a ‘cluster’. After a first categorization the key materials were translated into English through the following procedure: they were translated by one author who speaks Portuguese and English and proofread by an English native speaker. Then, they were given to the Brazilian researcher for a back translation (Van de Vijver and Leung, 1997). When the original and the back translation diverged, a discussion to resolve any anomalies was conducted with the English and Portuguese native speakers.

Three aggregate dimensions were identified: country-of-origin, BrazilCo in the host country, and the implementation of HR ‘best practice’. In order to confirm the internal consistency of the data analysis and the reliability of the identified categories, the files were coded twice by the same researcher, a process which Krippendorff (2004) has termed ‘stability reliability’. No significant differences were found with each categorization.

The study’s preliminary findings were returned to the company for ‘member-checking’ in two phases. First, they were reviewed with the global HRM director in a face-to-face interview, over the phone with the Swiss and Canadian HRM managers, and subsequently in January 2013 (as indicated above) with corporate HR management. Then, a draft report was sent to management in Brazil, Switzerland, Norway, Canada and the UK for factual verification.

7. Findings

We begin first by detailing the MNC's management structure and principal aspects of its global HR model. We then turn to consider their implementation, and, in particular, the manner in which they were received by the subsidiaries' workforces.

Management structures. BrazilCo's managerial structure was composed of seven levels, the most senior of which (L7) was the CEO. Strategic decisions were taken by the CEO and five executive (L6) officers all of whom were Brazilian nationals. All L7- and L6-managers were based in the Brazilian HQ as were most of the L5 and L4 positions. Decision-making within the company was highly centralized and was portrayed as being "autocratic". This was thought by most senior managers interviewed as being 'normal' for a Brazilian company: "BrazilCo is fundamentally *cariocentrica*¹. It is there in that building [HQ] where people act as if they were at the center of the world" (Middle Brazilian manager).

The transfer of HR practices. The centralization of management decision-making was also accompanied by the importation of US-sourced 'best practice'. These new HR policies were developed in association with American consultancy firms, including Accenture, McKinsey, Boston Consultant Group (BCG), Booz Allen, Ernest & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. "We use consultancies. There is a technical analysis behind it (the practice). There are several well-known international consultancies which globally assist us. They search the market for what we need to do". (Middle Brazilian manager).

Such was the extent of American consultancies' firms involvement in BrazilCo that they were frequently observed "as being part" of the company's structure. Virtually all departments worked with external consultants in the development and implementation of different projects. Some managers complained of having to deal with consultants over long periods of time. "Sometimes I think, 'please get them out of here'", one manager protested.

¹ As a reference to *carioca* - people who were born and live in Rio de Janeiro.

There was a pervading sense that they were merely doing what they were being told to do by the consultants: “When you import the American mainstream you are standardizing your company to that (imported) tradition... it is something like a cookie cutter (Middle Brazilian manager).

In the human resources department, a large variety of projects were undertaken by Accenture and Boston Consultant Group. The latter, for example, implemented the staff career and development program, and worked in redesigning jobs. It was also in charge of producing training workshops for Brazilian managers. Accenture dealt with the development and implementation of learning management programs in Brazil and overseas. Again with the consultancy firms’ help, Brazilian management worked to bring together their various HR policies to develop a so-called “global HR model”, which was then cascaded down to each individual subsidiary via the regional divisions. Ultimately, the American consultancy firms introduced practices that were developed in the United States and were referred to as “American best practice”. Local subsidiaries were then expected to implement these practices, which became known as the company’s human resources “DNA” or “global model”. The global model comprised performance evaluation, leadership training, career and succession planning and pay-for-performance. The implementation of the MNC’s global model was intended to permit BrazilCo to standardize its procedures and policies across the MNC:

The key point [in the implementation of the global model] was to identify the ‘lowest common denominator’ of a policy and not to give in under any circumstance (Brazilian former director).

[... HR policies and practices] they are not changing for any country. It is something like ... if you are in this school you have to wear its uniform, whether you like it or not; or you change your school (Brazilian director).

It is about standardizing. The argument is, if you standardize, you remove inefficiencies and you have a predictable outcome. I don't believe the organization likes unpredictability. If you put in enough management processes and you believe in the management processes, as opposed to the people activity, you can lead yourself to say 'well I have all the systems in place, people just need to follow them' (Senior Canadian manager).

In the four subsidiaries, while most local managers stated that they were familiar with many of the new practices which the company wanted to introduce and most saw value in their introduction, they queried the manner in which they were transferred by Brazilian management. There was, as the quotations above illustrate, little room for local management to discuss or alter the implementation process.

Management development. The company's global human resources model gave particular focus to the role performed by line managers. For each of the seven management levels there were specific *ritos de passagem* ('rites of passage'). Employees in the first and second levels, which were respectively analyst and supervisor positions, undertook a week's training in respect of "what it means to be a BrazilCo leader". Staff at the third level took a one-week course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which taught participants of the complexities involved in managing people and, in particular, across different national cultures. L4 and higher level managers were provided with a one-week leadership course at the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland. The company also had a global career and succession policy which facilitated global internal recruitment and promotion.

Reward management. BrazilCo saw itself as a "meritocracy", rewarding and promoting employees who demonstrated superior performance. Its pay-for-performance system which applied to all its subsidiaries was based on three different elements: company (25 per cent), department (25 per cent), and individual (50 per cent) performance. However, the proportion

of employees' remuneration which was comprised of pay-for-performance was permitted to vary between countries depending on local practice and traditions. That being said, each subsidiary was expected to adopt an "aggressive":

"BrazilCo has this aggressive attitude regarding pay-for-performance. It is more aggressive than that which is usually found in the market place. Sometimes it is not well accepted in other cultures, but we still implement it"
(Middle Brazilian manager).

7.1 The transfer of 'best practice' to BrazilCo' subsidiaries

7.1.1 *Canada*

Upon acquiring CanadaCo, BrazilCo moved all of its former HQ functions from Toronto to Rio de Janeiro. It then transferred its global HR model which was perceived locally as "thou shalt"; that is, while local management saw nothing necessarily "wrong" with the policies, they queried whether they would be better than the existing local practices and the unilateral manner in which they were implemented.

The Canadian managers also confirmed that BrazilCo made extensive use of US-based consultancy firms and that the policies had been 'benchmarked' against leading international companies. One senior manager showed one of the researchers a bunch of cards where each card represented a company and its policies that had been benchmarked by BrazilCo's consultants. It became clear then that BrazilCo not only benchmarked its practices against those of American MNCs, but it did also against other leading international companies, irrespective of their nationality (although American MNCs predominated). Interviewees confirmed that the HR policies had not been developed by Canadians: "I have been told no policies would come from here (Canada); policies would come from (HQ) and are to be implemented here" (Middle Canadian manager). Their introduction and implementation gave rise to tensions and difficulties among staff, but the prevailing view among management was that it was best to accept these policies.

I see my Canadian subordinates are upset about it. I have moved on, I have just accepted that they are different and it is not personal, it is not anti-Canadian, it is not anti-Brazilian. It is actually part of the game we were employed to play; stand back, reconcile what your own personal differences may well be and move along because we have a lot of work to do (Senior Canadian manager).

To illustrate the problems that arose, the Canadian managers gave special emphasis to the manner in which the pay-for-performance policy was introduced. They claimed they were unsure and uncertain as to how it would work in practice, and despite requesting that they be given the time to discuss and debate its merits, they had no influence over its implementation. This created feelings of distrust among the managers. One Canadian manager commented:

Where the gap exists is in the implementation and execution. They try to copy international ‘best practice’, but the implementation is different. They know how to implement in Brazil. Now, how to implement things in a different cultural setting is a challenge. It has been an absolute disaster in North-America. (Senior Canadian Manager).

The introduction of new payment and pension policies for manual workers in the mines and refineries involved respectively changes to the existing bonus scheme, which had been linked to the market price for nickel and a shift from a defined-benefit to a defined-contribution pension plan. Under CanadaCo’s ownership, the nickel price bonus was triggered when the price of nickel reached US\$2 per pound; there was no cap. BrazilCo wished to reform this plan and introduce a new pay-for-performance scheme. This was to allow for 70 per cent of workers’ annual earnings to be fixed and the remaining 30 per cent to be determined by performance (24%) and the price of nickel (6%).

In July 2009, following attempts by management to negotiate a new collective agreement, the miners rejected the proposal. The workers objected that the new payment and pension policies would result in a significant reduction in their earnings and retirement

benefits. They further claimed that management would not be able to fairly evaluate employees' performance levels. In objection the workers voted for strike action. The subsequent strike, which lasted for up to 18 months, became the longest-lasting private sector strike in Canada for more than 30 years. When the workers eventually abandoned their action, BrazilCo proceeded to introduce the new policies as originally planned, although they made a slight adjustment to the pay scheme by increasing the nickel price bonus component from 6 per cent to 8 per cent and reducing the pay-for-performance component from 24 per cent to 22 per cent. Senior management justified the new policies on the basis that they were now "company's global policy", and they had been already implemented in other subsidiaries.

We are trying to make sure we have uniform policies across the organization. BrazilCo is a very fair, very successful international company; so, we can't make an exception in Canada just because these guys feel that they have been on this pension plan for so many years that nothing ever changes (Senior Canadian manager).

By contrast, the programs for management training were well-received by local management. They particularly appreciated the career and succession planning program and the manner in which feedback and talent mapping was produced, as well as the way these initiatives afforded them opportunities for advancement, which they saw as having been considerably more limited in CanadaCo. The Canadian subsidiaries implemented all the associated policies according to the requirements of BrazilCo's global model.

7.1.2 The UK

Under CanadaCo's management, the British subsidiary had enjoyed considerable autonomy to decide its own HR policies and practices. Post-acquisition the Brazilian management extended their "command and control style of management" to the UK. As in Canada, British managers observed both the shift in the locus of power and the influence of consultancy firms:

“BrazilCo is run by consultancy firms” (Middle British manager). “They (Brazilian management) want to control everything. I think we all get used to this business of do it by yesterday...and that is a Brazilian influence for sure; that is control and command (Senior British manager).

In order to ensure that the necessary systems and procedures were put in place, the HQ put an implementation team in place that was described to us as a team which “pushed from behind”. In turn the Brazilian managers were portrayed as having a “project to implement”. “They will do it, no matter what. You can’t say no”, explained a senior UK manager. Although local management conceded that some very good policies were introduced and that their standardization was important so that corporate management would have a better understanding of each subsidiary’s performance, their implementation was perceived to be problematic. As in Canada, there was little, if any, room for discussion or consultation:

They just have this plan and you will do it and, if you don’t do it, they’ll get somebody else to do it (Middle British manager).

So, we find it quite frustrating if we are told, “don’t want to talk about it, just do it”, and so that for us, culturally, it’s quite disrespectful and that is how it is perceived with a number of these major projects. We don’t have much opportunity to input into them (Middle British manager).

Many, too, felt that the role of external consultants had become over-bearing. One interviewee said, “I would say there are too many consultants. (HQ should) let the managers manage it”. The company’s career and succession program was implemented along with a similar performance evaluation system. The new pay-for-performance policy and defined-contribution pension plan was also introduced, but in contrast to Canada, there was no resistance to their implementation in the UK. The former was perceived by British employees

as a significant windfall that was not enjoyed by employees in other companies in the locality. They also saw themselves as being comparatively well paid.

There aren't a lot of other heavy industries in this area. So if you are comparing your income with other people that work in the local shops and the public sector... Do you think people working in the public sector get 25 per cent bonuses? People see they are better off than people who do not get any bonus (Senior British manager).

The circumstances of the local labor market and employees' relatively good earnings were thus a key influence in shaping their response to the new policies. Managers were also comfortable with the pay-for-performance policy, indicating that the goals that an employee must achieve in order to receive the full bonus helped them to improve the organization's productivity, principally by reducing employee absenteeism (there was a sickness penalty tied into the bonus payment policy).

7.1.3 Switzerland

BrazilCo's global HR model was also transferred to Switzerland and local management confirmed that the company made extensive use of international consultants. They also reported that they enjoyed little autonomy and felt compelled to adhere to the policies and practices as delineated by HQ management. The Swiss managers observed that ordinarily they would have expected to have been able to query, or perhaps challenge corporate management proposals or decision-making, but in BrazilCo this was difficult. Nonetheless, many of the 'best practice' methods which were introduced were well-known to the Swiss managers and were welcomed with the exception of pay-for-performance. That apart, they did not see any problem – in theory – in adopting the global model and its associated 'best practice'. However, their concerns were in regard to the manner in which the Brazilian management

sought to ape international practices without considering why other companies choose these particular practices or indeed whether and how they might be implemented in other countries.

I think Brazilian companies in general see things which other people are doing and adopt them, saying ‘OK, we will do the same because they are doing it’ but without doing any sort of research behind it on why they chose that way or how it is going to be implemented, or, you know, is this the best thing for us? (Senior Swiss manager).

Another senior manager objected: “It is not the system itself, it is the way they asked us to do it”. Swiss managers suggested that it would have been better had BrazilCo focused on the process of introducing policies, and invited local input in a way which would engage local managers. This, they argued, would have helped in the implementation process: “They just sent it out to everyone and said ‘here you go’” (Middle Swiss manager). “I do not think we have been able to make a real difference or have a real influence, or real sharing here” (Middle Swiss manager).

Of the policies introduced, the Swiss managers particularly welcomed the provision of leadership and management training, and especially the opportunity to attend courses at IMD and MIT, together with the career and succession planning program. The latter was seen to be particularly important in retaining key staff in a tight local labor market where alternative job opportunities abounded.

The introduction of pay-for-performance, however, was a different matter. There was little or no consultation on the principle of its introduction, although local management did prevail on their Brazilian superiors to reduce the variable component from almost half of management’s salary to 21 per cent. The justification was that too high a variable component would have made it too difficult to recruit Swiss employees. But even with this reduced variable component management still complained that it was too large when

compared with the practice of other large companies: “In this market, it is too high, too much of an uncertainty. The Swiss prefer to be sure what they are getting” (Middle Swiss Manager). Nonetheless, the employees felt they had little option but to accept the imported pay practices. They observed that BrazilCo had been enticed to come to Switzerland by the availability of various industrial development incentives, including tax concessions. Interviewees observed that the Swiss subsidiary could appropriately be described as a “post box” and that its activities could be transferred to another country with considerable ease.

7.1.4 Norway

BrazilCo’s global HR model was also transferred to its Norwegian subsidiary. The Norwegian managers acknowledged that the policies and practices were benchmarked against ‘best practice’ internationally. In testimony a manager cited their discussions with PwC analysts who told them: “big companies do it like that”. Again the Brazilian HQ was seen to be insistent in introducing benchmarked policies and practices, regardless of whether they were perceived to suit the Norwegian context: “...but here we have the lack of adjustment. That is the problem. It is not the benchmarking itself, but it is the lack of adjustment” (Senior Norwegian manager).

At the time we undertook our fieldwork, the Norwegian subsidiary was implementing the company’s career and succession plan. Local managers queried its usefulness in discussions with us and complained that it had not been adapted to local practices and traditions, but felt their concerns had not been addressed by their superiors in Rio de Janeiro. One senior manager said “I like the system although it is not adjusted to our needs”. Another concern, apart from its likely cost, related to the uncertainty surrounding how the Norwegian workers would interpret the policy’s operation. It was said in the interviews that Norwegian people do not like to receive feedback without having participated in the design of such policies. Local management believed the person being appraised should have the right to

“argue, accept, deny, and enquire. We talk to people and not about people”, said a senior manager.

The implementation of the performance-related pay scheme also raised concerns. Previously in the Norwegian plant an incremental salary scale scheme had been in use prior to the facility’s closure. Provision for this was also enshrined in the industry’s collective agreement which obliged all companies to pay an additional percentage increase in the salary for every year worked by an employee. It was expected that this practice would have been adhered to by BrazilCo. However, because this was the custom and not a legal requirement, BrazilCo’s HQ refused to pay the benefit: “They said: ‘we don’t have to pay it; it is not a question if we want to pay, but we don’t have to pay, so we don’t pay it’” (Norwegian employee).

The Brazilian managers did, however, travel to Norway in order to discuss the pay-for-performance policy with trade union leaders, who had opposed it, as had management. “You have to organize your life on the assumption of a regular payment, not for this possible peak once a year” (Middle Norwegian manager). However, corporate management let it be known that the Norwegian workers would not receive any salary increase if they continued to oppose the introduction of pay-for-performance. At this point, the trade union re-considered its position: “[the employees] want to get extra money. If we don’t have the agreement, we don’t get anything” (Norwegian employee representative).

The policy was introduced in 2006 and while it followed the broad procedural parameters as elsewhere in the MNC, the collective negotiations did lead to the variable component being significantly reduced. In the case of operators’ annual salary the variable component was reduced from 20 per cent to 8 per cent and from 50 per cent to 20 per cent in the case of managers’ and engineers’ salaries, and finally to 30 per cent for the site manager. The staff was in favor of the scheme as it was seen to insulate them from the subsidiary’s poor

performance and the financial losses endured immediately prior to our research. The findings from the four subsidiaries are summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1. The transfer of BrazilCo's HR policies to its subsidiaries

| HR Policy | Canada | UK | Norway | Switzerland |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Pay for performance | Implemented albeit in the face of stern workforce resistance. A modest concession granted to workers | Fully implemented with approval of local workforce and management | Implemented but with some significant concessions in the face of managerial and workforce objections | Fully implemented – with some small concessions granted to workers |
| Performance evaluation | Fully implemented – no concessions to local subsidiary | Fully implemented – no concessions to local subsidiary | Fully implemented – no concessions to local subsidiary | Fully implemented – no concessions to local subsidiary |
| Leadership Training Programs | Welcomed and fully implemented | Welcomed and fully implemented | Implemented at higher managerial levels | Welcomed and fully implemented |
| Career and succession program | Welcomed and fully implemented | Welcomed and fully implemented | Implemented at higher managerial levels | Welcomed and fully implemented |

8. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the transfer of a particular model of HR ‘best practice’ within a Brazilian MNC to four of its subsidiaries in the UK, Canada, Switzerland and Norway. Specifically it enquires where the MNC’s HR model was sourced from, to what extent it bore a distinct Brazilian complexion, and whether and to what degree it was adapted to meet the strictures of national institutional constraints and the expectations of staff at subsidiary level. The paper uses these questions to address an important theoretical debate in the international business and international human resource management literatures; that is, whether the pattern of diffusion of management practices within MNCs will lead to a convergence of practices across companies and countries, or whether such a scenario is highly unlikely given the variety of social and political constraints which might limit such a process at a local level. Based on our reading of the international literature, we anticipated *a priori* that corporate

management would face greater constraints in transferring its HR model to the more rigid systems of Norway and Switzerland than it would encounter by comparison in the more liberal regimes of Canada and the UK (Edwards and Kuruvilla, 2005; Farndale and Paauwe, 2007; Ferner and Edwards, 1995).

Our findings reveal that the HR practices adopted by BrazilCo were largely of American origin. The MNC relied to a very considerable degree on the expertise and services of US-based consultancy firms in designing and implementing its policies. Its 'global HR model' thus assumed a distinct American accent. However we also found that it was introduced with a very firm hand by Brazilian management, to the extent that headquarters' management were rarely tolerant of any local questioning of its policies' merits, or of the manner of their implementation. The starkest illustration of this was the company's preparedness to confront and face down a bitter and protracted industrial dispute in its Canadian subsidiaries. The only significant exception to this unilateralist posture was management's willingness to consult with the Norwegian workforce and agree to reduce the variable component of employees' salary. Otherwise, however, the company global HR model was introduced as designed in all four subsidiaries.

Thus the major empirical contribution of this study is its illustration of the manner in which a complex process (the transfer of a specific HR model informed by 'international best practice') worked itself out across particular levels of influence, including local, sectoral, national and international. We find that notwithstanding the American origin of these practices they were married to a distinctive Brazilian managerial ethos which insisted on management's prerogative to manage. Thus while we argue that the practices themselves were not Brazilian in origin and, in this sense bore no discernible parent country hallmark, we find that the style of management which accompanied their transfer to be deeply rooted in Brazil's national business system. The latter was hierarchical and steadfast in its unwillingness to

broker any resistance to its policies' transfer. We consider this – the manner in which these two discrete country (US and Brazilian) effects came to be interwoven in the practice of international HRM in an emerging country MNC and which came to override host country institutional constraints – to be a significant contribution to our understanding of the processes by which an emerging-country MNC transferred its policies to its overseas subsidiaries.

Thus, the striking finding of this research is the lengths to which the case MNC went to impose a unitary model of HR on all of its subsidiaries regardless of the countries in which they were located, regardless of the stage of the production process they were involved in (extraction, refining, administration or management), or indeed regardless of the extent to which local workforces sought to resist or shape the model's imposition. This is a very significant finding especially when placed alongside that of MNCs from advanced economies that seek to 'corporate' models of HR in a manner which directly challenges indigenous practice and custom. That BrazilCo was willing and able to contest the institutional fabric of its host subsidiaries is largely explained by relations of power and economic dependence. BrazilCo was a large and dominant player in its sector. Many of its operations were located in peripheral regions, in areas of relative disadvantage and high unemployment. It held considerable sway over local development agencies, local workforces and communities who came to rely on its investment. It was not that local management and workforces were devoid of local resources to exert influence over BrazilCo's policies, it was rather the case that they found it difficult to marshal them and where they tried, corporate management possessed the means to overcome any local resistance. Fear of the possibility that the MNC may source raw materials in other cheaper locations, or move production or administrative functions from one subsidiary to another, weakened the power of local actors. Such contextual circumstances are central in accounting for the lack of localization of corporate management policies, and were significantly more important in explaining outcomes than the formal institutional features of

the local employment relations regimes of Canada, Norway, Switzerland and the UK. The introduction of performance-related pay and pension reforms provide the starkest illustration. But there apart, even where local management and workforces valued and welcomed the implementation of other policies, but sought to query how they might be introduced and adapted to suit the local context, they met with little success.

With such findings, then, do we do better to think in terms of the convergence of practice as being the most significant feature of the management of HR in this emerging country MNC, or rather does the contingency perspective provide greater theoretical purchase in explaining our findings? The case for the former is significant. We find that our case MNC worked as a vector (Ferner et al., 2012) in disseminating ‘international best practice’ from a dominant economy (the US) and contributed to the convergence of managerial practices across its overseas subsidiaries. We further argue that the globalization of production together with the attendant integration of supply chains (as conceived broadly to include production and managerial practices) was found to enfold subsidiaries and their workforces into rationalities other than those prescribed by national institutions and customs. Such ‘logics’ facilitated the diffusion of ‘international best practice’ from a hegemonic business system (the US) via a dominant sectoral firm to economically dependent regions and subsidiaries. Thus, we claim that the importation of such ‘foreign’ models reduced the specificity of national host countries’ models of HR. However, we argue that such external forces account only in part for the outcomes witnessed in this study, for they operated in tandem with social action and power relations within the firm. Advantage leaned towards the MNC’s headquarters to the extent that the degree to which national contexts mediated and conditioned systemic or globalization dynamics was very limited. In such a weakened and dependent local context the power of the MNC to diffuse ‘international best practice’ was facilitated and hastened. Critically, then, the extent to which, and the manner by which, ‘international best practice’

was transferred depended on the nature of the relationship between transferor and transferee; that is, on their relative positions in the global system of production (Smith and Meiksins 1995). Such contingencies steer our conclusions in a different direction to that originally conceived and emphasize the likelihood for variations across MNCs and sectors. In this study the co-existence of dominant-country practices and a dominant sectoral firm strengthened the likelihood of the diffusion of similar practices. Such processes where they are replicated across MNCs and sectors can be expected to generate further convergence within sectors across countries, but otherwise pluralism and eclecticism between sectors and across countries might be the predominant pattern along the lines envisaged by Smith and Meiksins (1995) and by Katz and Darbishire (2000) in their conceptualization of “converging divergences”. Where such patterns are generalized national models of employment relations and HR can be expected to fragment further.

These theoretical conclusions inevitably point to the current study’s boundaries. This is a study of a single MNC from one emerging economy in one specific (sunset) industry at a particular point in time. Its findings suggest particular conclusions, principally that pressures for convergence co-exist with those promoting diversity and of the requirement of future research to examine whether similar processes are evident elsewhere by examining the interaction of various effects operating across different levels – system (i.e., the characteristics of capitalism as a model of production), societies (i.e., countries), and hierarchy (i.e., dominance effects at country and sectoral levels) – as envisaged by Smith and Meiksins (1995) as well as others (Guillén, 2001). It does however seem likely that as MNCs from other emerging countries globalize and assume positions of dominance in their sectors that they too will seek to diffuse their particular brand of ‘best practice’. In this case study the specific brand of ‘best practice’ included a package of US-sourced global uniform HR practices that were combined with ‘Brazilian’ hierarchical centralism in a manner consistent

with Schneider's (2009) conceptualization of firms originating from hierarchical market economies. We argue that, while this coercive hierarchical style of management is deeply rooted in Brazilian culture, its expression in the four host countries was facilitated by a particular pattern of economic and political relations. Thus while we might conceivably expect other Brazilian MNCs and perhaps also MNCs from other hierarchical market economies to adopt an assertive or forceful style of management, and perhaps that it, too, might be combined with US-derived 'best practice', the extent to which this might be realized in a fashion close to that found here is likely to be contingent on the 'strength' of the particular MNC in the market place and in the host economy. To the degree that other emerging country or hierarchical market economy MNCs are able to have their way in diffusing their version of 'best practice', the question then arises as to what extent will they come to act as benchmarks for efficiency for other firms within their sector? We have not been able to ask this question in our research, but it is of obvious importance to the themes explored here.

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Appendix 1

| Primary Data Sources | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| List of in-depth interviewees | Country in which interviewed | Language of interview | Tape Recorded |
| Global HR director (a) | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Global HR director (b) | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Recruiting manager (a) | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Recruiting manager (b) | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Sourcing senior manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Global training manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Training manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Compensation senior manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Global HR senior manager* | Switzerland | Portuguese | yes |
| Corporate affairs senior manager* | Switzerland | Portuguese | yes |
| HR senior manager | Switzerland | English | yes |
| HR manager | Switzerland | English | yes |
| Rewards senior manager* | Switzerland | Portuguese | no |
| Financial manager | Switzerland | English | yes |
| Commercial manager | Switzerland | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs manager | Switzerland | English | yes |
| Global HR vice-president | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Sourcing manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Global HR director | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Recruiting senior manager* | Canada | Portuguese | yes |
| Training manager | Canada | English | yes |
| Production Senior manager | Canada | English | yes |
| HR manager | Canada | English | yes |
| HR senior manager | Canada | English | yes |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|------------|-----|
| HR director | Canada | English | no |
| Compensation manager | Canada | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs vice-president | Canada | English | yes |
| Financial senior manager* | Canada | Portuguese | yes |
| HR vice-president | Canada | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs senior manager | Canada | English | yes |
| Trade union director - USW | Canada | English | yes |
| HR senior manager | Norway | English | yes |
| Finance senior manager | Norway | English | yes |
| Trade union representative | Norway | English | yes |
| Production manager | Norway | English | yes |
| Site director | Norway | English | yes |
| Commercial manager | Norway | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs senior manager | Norway | English | yes |
| Trade union director - LO | Norway | English | yes |
| Trade union director - CUT | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Trade union Director - Força Sindical | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Trade union director - UTG | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Global HR manager | Brazil | Portuguese | yes |
| Former HR Global Director | Brazil | Portuguese | no |
| Site director | UK | English | yes |
| Production senior manager | UK | English | yes |
| Trade union representative | UK | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs senior manager | UK | English | yes |
| Financial senior manager | UK | English | no |
| HR senior manager | UK | English | yes |
| Corporate affairs manager | UK | English | yes |

* Brazilian expatriates

| Secondary Data Sources | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| Sources | Title | Country | Number of articles/videos |
| Magazine | <i>Veja</i> | Brazil | 1,144 |
| Newspaper | <i>Folha de São Paulo</i> | Brazil | 1,402 |
| Books | <i>Commemorative Books</i> | Brazil | 5 |
| Annual reports | <i>Annual reports</i> | Brazil | 70 |
| Newspaper | <i>Le Temps</i> | Switzerland | 19 |
| Newspaper | <i>Tribune de Genève</i> | Switzerland | 8 |
| Newspaper | <i>Toronto Star</i> | Canada | 1,140 |
| Newspaper | <i>The Sudbury Star</i> | Canada | 500 |
| Magazine | <i>Northern Life</i> | Canada | 9 videos |
| Web site | <i>Norwegian Confederation of Trade union</i> | Norway | 10 |
| Web site | <i>Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise</i> | Norway | 2 |
| Web site | <i>Official Norwegian Reports</i> | Norway | 2 |
| Newspaper | <i>Western Mail's</i> | UK | 67 |
| Newspaper | <i>South Wales Evening Post</i> | UK | 88 |
| Internal Communications | <i>Emails, collective agreements, procedures to be followed, policies, internal presentations</i> | Brazil, Switzerland, Canada and the UK | 20 |